113, 101, 221, 619, 463 Kurd MAII

[For information on the Kurd see h: Coon, Mi Middle East, cat. 116, pp. 215-217.]

[For comparative Anthropometry of Southwestern Asia see i: Field, MAI Iran, category 116, pp. 436-489.]

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CHAPTER 1

Introductory

121 The following account is based upon a five weeks field survey carried out during the summer of 1938. It was intended to follow this up with an intensive study of one locality over a period of twelve months. Political developments in Europe made this project impracticable at the time and the notes here presented

For the facilities afforded me in Iraq I am particularly indebted to Mr.C.J.Edmonds, Adviser to the Iraq Government, Captain Hyman Hall, Oriental Secretary at the British Embassy Baghdad, and His Excellency Ahmad Beg & Tawfiq Beg, Mutasarrif of Arbil, in whose province this research was carried out.

The justification for publishing the somewhat superficial data contained in this monograph lies in the absence of any strictly comparable material elsewhere. The general form of Kurdish social organisation as here described is probably fairly typical of that of a large number of Mohammedan peoples scattered throughout the mountainous areas of western Asia. Concerning such peoples there is at present available very little ethnographic material of any kind and the particulars that the Kurdish form of society is typical is put forward as an hypothesis open to correction in the light of further study.

121 121 Of more immediate relevance is the close correspondence that undoubtedly exists between Kurdish social forms and those of Arabia in general. This fact is of interest since linguistically the Kurds are of "aryan" rather than "semitic" stock. Concerning the "manners and customs" of various Bedouin and Semitic groups there is of course an enormous mass of literature available, some of it of the highest scientific quality, but the emphasis in every case has been to make an historical record of ethnographic fact rather than to study any particular group as a society in functioning existence at the present time. The work of Thesiger, Musil, Lane, Dresser and Murray to name but a few, though admirably detailed, is by modern standards somewhat lifeless, since it describes the pattern of various cultural norms without, as a rule, showing their social significance or demonstrating the fundamental interrelationship between them. The earlier studies of Robertson-Smith, Frazer and Westermarck were entirely synthetic in character and gave no true picture of the functioning of any single

114 113 * A. Jaussen - Les Coutumes des Arabs au Pays de Moab
A. Musil - Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins
H.H.Lane - Manners and Customs of the Bedouin Egyptians
H.H.Dresser - The Bedouins of Iraq and Iran
C.H.Murray - Sons of Ishmael

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114 society. Nevertheless these works continue to be of fundamental
importance as contributions to anthropological theory. There have been
• 113 important studies of particular aspects of semitic culture, notably that
of Mrs. Seligman on Kinship and Granqvist on Marriage, the latter being
at the present time unique in its wealth of documentary detail concerning
the actual position of women in a Mohammedan society, but we still
lack a continental study for any single area. Owing to the lack of
adequate empirical data the present monograph does not effectively fill
that gap, but it does provide for the first time an indication of the
practical organisation of a settled group whose kinship affiliations are
of the typical semitic pattern. The details of my account will it is
hoped be filled in and elaborated by further research.

The existing documentary material concerning Kurdistan and the
Kurds is somewhat meagre in quality. Most of it consists of highly
romanticised travel stories of which the title of Millingen's Wild life
among the Kurds (1870) gives a fair indication of the contents. The
romantic tradition is incidentally still maintained, as evidence
G.J.Meuller's Blubrush in verschiedenen Kurdistan published only in 1935

For the Southern Kurdish area in general little serious
ethnographic material is available, though Baltazar Christoff's Kurdes
und Armenier dealing with the Turkish area to the north has some
relevance. V.F.Minorsky's Kurdes Notes and Observations published in
Russian in 1915 refers, I believe, in part to the area under discussion
but this has not been accessible to me.

Concerning the Rowanduz area itself there are only two books
generally accessible. A.H.Hamilton's Road through Kurdistan which is a
light hearted though highly interesting account of the construction of
the strategic motor road up to Rowanduz and on to the frontier, and
W.H.Hay's Two Years in Kurdistan. The latter deals precisely with the
same area and the same individuals as are the subject of this monograph
I shall refer to it frequently both in criticism and as providing
supporting evidence. Further local colour may be obtained from
W.A.Wigram's Cradle of Mankind, which deals with a neighbouring area
slightly to the North West; the author's religious prejudices in favour
of the Assyrian (Christian) community however give a marked bias to
many of his judgements.

12 If my own study I regret that further research will doubtless
correct my analysis on many points of detail. Nevertheless I believe
the general correlation of the elements of social organisation to be

* H.S.Seligman - Studies in Semitic Kinship (Bulletin of the
School of Oriental Studies Vol.iii)
H.N.Granqvist - Marriage Conditions in a Palestine Village